



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Education, Youth and Culture

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President **Mr. John O' Donoghue, TD,**
Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism of Ireland
Mr. Dermot Ahern, TD,
Minister for Communications, Marine and
Natural Resources of Ireland
Mr Noel Dempsey, TD,
Minister for Education and Science of Ireland
Ms. Síle de Valera, TD,
Minister of State at the Department of
Education and Science of Ireland

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 285 87 16 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 285 8026
press.office@consilium.eu.int <http://ue.eu.int/Newsroom>

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Main Results of the Council

The Council designated Luxembourg and Sibiu (Romania) as **European Capitals of Culture** for 2007, as well as Liverpool (United Kingdom) and Stavanger (Norway) for 2008. It further adopted a Decision enabling the new Member States to participate in the event from 2009.

The Council reached political agreement on a draft Council Decision establishing "**Europass**", a single portfolio of standardised European CV and other documents reflecting personal competences and qualifications, with a view to facilitate the mobility of workers and trainees in Europe.

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- The documents whose references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site <http://ue.eu.int>.
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the above mentioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- EC-fYROM Stabilisation and Association CouncilI

PARTICIPANTS

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Bernd GENTGES

Minister for Education and Training, Culture and Tourism
(German-speaking Community)

Ms Marleen VANDERPOORTEN

Flemish Minister for Education and Training

Mr Paul VAN GREMBERGEN

Flemish Minister for Home Affairs, Culture, Youth and
the Civil Service

Czech Republic:

Mr Pavel DOSTÁL

Minister for Culture

Ms Petra BUZKOVÁ

Minister for Education, Youth and Sports

Denmark:

Ms Ulla TØRNÆS

Minister for Education

Germany:

Mr Thomas GOPPEL

Minister of State

Mr Wolf-Michael CATENHUSEN

Secretary of State

Mr Peter RUHENSTROTH-BAUER

Secretary of State

Estonia:

Mr Toivo MAIMETS

Minister for Education and Science

Greece:

Ms Marietta GIANNAKOU

Minister for Education and Religious Affairs

Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS

Minister of State

Ms Vaso KOLIA

Secretary-General

Spain:

Ms Carmen CALVO POYATO

Minister for Culture

Ms María Jesús SANSEGUNDO GÓMEZ DE CADIÑANOS

Minister for Education and Science

Ms Amparo VALCARCE GARCÍA

State Secretary for Social Services, the Family and People
with Disabilities

France:

Renaud DONNEDIEU de VABRES

Minister for Culture and Communication

Mr François FILLON

Minister for National Education, Higher Education and
Research

Ireland:

Mr John O'DONOGHUE

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism

Mr Dermot AHERN

Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural
Resources

Mr John BROWNE

Minister of State at the Department of Communications,
Marine and Natural Resources

Mr Noel DEMPSEY

Minister for Education and Science

Ms Sile de VALERA

Minister of State at the Department of Education and
Science with special responsibility for Adult Education,
Youth Affairs and Educational Disadvantage

Italy:

Mr Giuliano URBANI

Minister for Cultural Assets and Activities

Ms Maria Grazia SILIQUINI

State Secretary for Education, the Universities and
Research

Ms Grazia SESTINI

State Secretary for Labour and Social Policy

Cyprus:

Mr Kornelios KORNELIOU

Deputy Permanent Representative

Latvia:

Ms Helēna DEMA KOVA

Minister for Culture

Lithuania:

Ms Roma ŽAKAITIENĖ

Mr Rimantas ŠADŽIUS

Minister for Culture

Deputy Minister for Social Security and Labour

Luxembourg:

Ms Erna HENNICOT-SCHOEPGES

Ms Anne BRASSEUR

Minister for Culture, Higher Education and Research,
Minister for Public Works

Minister for Education, Vocational Training and Sport

Hungary:

Mr István HILLER

Mr Bálint MAGYAR

Mr Attila MESTERHÁZY

Minister for Cultural Heritage

Minister for Education

Political State Secretary, Ministry of Children, Youth and
Sports**Malta:**

Mr Louis GALEA

Minister for Education, Youth and Employment

Netherlands:

Ms Maria van der HOEVEN

Ms Medy van der LAAN

Ms Clémence ROSS-van DORP

Minister for Education, Culture and Science

State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science

State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport

Austria:

Mr Franz MORAK

Mr Karl SCHWEITZER

State Secretary, Federal Chancellery

State Secretary, Federal Chancellery

Poland:

Mr Mirosław SAVICKI

Mr Maciej KLIMCZAK

Minister for National Education and Sport

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Culture

Portugal:

Mr David JUSTINO

Minister for Education

Slovenia:

Ms Andreja RIHTER

Ms Lučka LORBER

Minister for Culture

State Secretary for Post-Secondary Vocational Education
and Higher Education**Slovakia:**

Mr Rudolf CHMEL

Mr Martin FRONC

Minister for Culture

Minister for Education

Finland:

Ms Tuula HAATAINEN

Minister for Education

Sweden:

Ms Marita ULVSKOG

Mr Carl LINDBERG

Minister for Culture

Secretary of State

United Kingdom:

Lord MCINTOSH OF HARINGEY

Mr Alan JOHNSON

Minister for Media and Heritage

Minister of State for Lifelong Learning and Higher
Education**Commission:**

Ms Viviane REDING

Ms Dalia GRYBAUSKAITE

Member

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

CULTURE

– *European capital of culture*

The Council took a number of decisions relating to the European Capital of Culture initiative:

Culture Capital for 2007 and 2008

The Council designated Luxembourg and Sibiu (Romania) as European Capitals of Culture for 2007, as well as Liverpool (United Kingdom) and Stavanger (Norway) for 2008.

Members of the selection panel

The Council nominated Mr Charlie Hennessy and Mr Bert van Meggelen as Council's representatives on the selection panel for European Capitals of Europe, on the basis of suggestions made by the Irish and Dutch delegations.

In fact, under the rules for the appointment of the members of the selection panel¹, the two Member States holding the Presidency during a given year each nominate a leading independent expert from the cultural sector to be appointed by the Council.

Extension to the new Member States

The Council agreed on the text of a draft European Parliament and Council Decision adapting Decision 1419/1999/EC² on the European Capitals of Culture event, in order to enable the participation of the EU's ten new Member States.

¹ Council Decision of 17 December 1999, OJ C 9, 13.1.2000, p. 1.

² Decision 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 1999 (OJ L 166, 1.7.1999, p.1).

Decision 1419/1999/EC contains a chronological list that determines for each year, from 2005 to 2019, the Member State eligible to nominate a city to host a European Capital of Culture. Given the symbolic importance of the event and the interest expressed by the new Member States in participating, the draft Decision will enable them to participate before 2020. Moreover, as preparations for the event can take several years, it makes no changes to the existing order and will apply only from 2009.

The draft Decision will complete the existing chronological order by adding for each year, from 2009 to 2019, one of the new Member States, under a new system with two Member States eligible each year. From 2009 onwards, the designation will apply to one city of each of the Member States appearing on the list.

The text as agreed is to be adopted in the form of a common position, without further discussion, at a forthcoming session of the Council, after its finalisation in all Community languages and be sent to the European Parliament with a view to its 2nd reading.

The European Capital of Culture event was launched by the Council in 1985, on the initiative of Greek Minister Melina Mercouri, with the aim of bringing European people closer together. Community support to the initiative, as well as the selection procedure for 2005 to 2019, are laid down by Decision 1419/1999/EC.

For further information, please consult the following documents on the Council's website: 9132/1/04 (2007), 9137/1/044 (2008), 15314/03 and 8708/04 (Proposal for a Decision amending Decision 1419/1999/EC).

– *New audiovisual and culture programmes*

The Commission presented a communication, entitled “Making citizenship Work: fostering European culture and diversity through programmes for Youth, Culture, Audiovisual and Civic Participation”, which outlines its intentions for a new generation of programmes for the 2007-13 period.

The Council held an exchange of views on the objectives, design and content of the future programmes, intended to help the Commission on its further reflections.

In fact, as the current audiovisual and culture programmes will come to an end on 2006, the Commission intends to submit, later this year, legislative proposals aimed at replacing Media-Plus and Media-Training, by a new unique audiovisual programme, and Culture 2000, by a new programme covering patrimonial preservation as well as creative activities.

For further information, please consult the following documents on the Council’s website: 7352/04.

– ***European audiovisual policy - Review of the "Television without frontiers Directive"***

The Council held a debate on the future of European audiovisual policy and, in particular, on the review of the “Television without frontiers Directive”³, on the basis of a Commission’s communication and a Presidency discussion paper.

This debate follows discussions held at an informal meeting of Ministers on broadcasting policy, held on 2-3 March.

Main points referred by the different delegations concerned:

- the scope of a revised Directive, in the context of the blurring of the distinction between broadcast and information society services,
- the role of broadcasting with regard to cultural and linguistic diversity;
- the ability to continue to have meaningful regulation at national level;
- the challenges posed by new advertising techniques;
- accessibility of broadcast services to people with disabilities;
- the viability of co- and self-regulation in a future regulatory environment.

The debate was intended to help the Commission on its further reflections on this field.

*For further information, please consult the following documents on the Council’s website:
16206/03 (Commission Communication) and 8977/04 (Presidency’s paper).*

³ Directive 89/552/EEC (OJ L 298, 17.10.1989, p. 23-30), as last amended by Directive 97/36/EC (OJ L 202, 30.7.1997, p. 60-70).

EDUCATION

– *Guidance throughout life in Europe - Resolution*

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States adopted the following resolution:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,
AWARE THAT

1. In the context of lifelong learning, guidance refers to a range of activities⁴ that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used.
2. Guidance provision within the education and training system, and especially in schools or at school level, has an essential role to play in ensuring that individuals' educational and career decisions are firmly based, and in assisting them to develop effective self-management of their learning and career paths. It is also a key instrument for education and training institutions to improve the quality and provision of learning.
3. Guidance throughout life contributes to the achievement of the European Union goals of economic development, labour market efficiency and occupational and geographical mobility by enhancing the efficiency of investment in education and vocational training, lifelong learning and human capital and workforce development.
4. Effective guidance provision has a key role to play in promoting social inclusion, social equity, gender equality and active citizenship by encouraging and supporting individuals' participation in education and training and their choice of realistic and meaningful careers.
5. Guidance in the Member States of the European Union is provided through a wide diversity of structures, delivery systems and practices across education, training, employment, unemployment and private and community sectors. Such diversity provides a rich basis for co-operation and mutual learning.
6. Guidance can provide significant support to individuals during their transition between levels and sectors of education and training systems and from school to adult and working life; to young people re-entering education or training after leaving school early; to persons re-entering the labour market after periods of voluntary or involuntary unemployment, or homemaking; to workers where sectoral restructuring requires them to change the nature of their employment; and to older workers and migrants.

⁴ Examples of such activities include information and advice giving, counselling, competence assessment, mentoring, advocacy, teaching decision-making and career management skills. In order to avoid ambiguity, since a variety of terms are used in Member States to describe services engaged in these activities, including educational, vocational or career guidance, guidance and counselling, occupational guidance/counselling services, etc., the term 'guidance' is used throughout this text to identify any or all of these forms of provision and Member States should interpret the term as referring to the appropriate provision in their own countries.

7. High quality guidance provision throughout life is a key component of education, training and employability strategies to attain the strategic goal of Europe becoming the world's most dynamic knowledge based society by 2010.

RECALL THAT

1. *The Report on the Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems* endorsed by the Stockholm European Council in 2001 has identified access to guidance services, quality assurance of services, the role of guidance in human resource development, and guidance to facilitate mobility for learning and employment in Europe as priority areas for development in the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme.
2. The Commission's Communication on lifelong learning (November 2001), *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, highlighted guidance as a transversal theme for developing and implementing lifelong learning strategies at national level and as a priority area for action at European and national levels.
3. The White Paper *A New Impetus for European Youth* (2001) refers to young people's needs for a flexible guidance and counselling system to support on-going access to lifelong and life-wide learning.
4. *The Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning* of June 27 2002 recommended that priority be given by Member States and the Commission to the provision of and access to high quality information, guidance and counselling on education and training opportunities in Europe, targeted at different groups.
5. The Commission Communication *Action Plan for Skills and Mobility* (2002) noted that occupational and geographical mobility in Europe and workforce up-skilling can be enhanced by providing better access for workers and employers to information, guidance and counselling.
6. *The Directive (2002/73/EC) amending Directive (76/207/EEC) on Equal Treatment for Men and Women* concerning access to employment, vocational training, promotion, and working conditions, includes the requirement of access to all types and to all levels of vocational guidance.
7. *The Council Resolution on the Promotion of Enhanced European Co-operation in Vocational Education and Training* of December 19 2002 acknowledged that priority should be given to the strengthening of policies, systems and practices relating to information, guidance and counselling in Member States, in order to support occupational and geographical mobility of European citizens.
8. The Commission Communication *Investing Efficiently in Education and Training: an Imperative for Europe* (2003) observed that investment in guidance and counselling services should be seen as providing early prevention strategies capable of significantly reducing mismatches between education and training and the needs of the labour market, increasing completion rates in secondary and higher education and facilitating the transition to work, as well as return to studies.
9. *The European Employment Guidelines* (2003) recommend, as a priority, the provision of early advice and guidance to prevent inflows into unemployment and particularly long-term unemployment.

10. *The Council Conclusions of 25 November 2003 on the development of human capital for social cohesion and competitiveness* stressed the importance of consistency and complementarity between policies in the field of education and training and social and economic strategies.
11. *The Council Resolution of 25 November 2003 on making school an open learning environment to prevent and combat early school leaving and disaffection among young people* recognised the need to strengthen the link and synergy between school and working life and the need to promote social inclusion with the involvement of families as well as youth and voluntary bodies.
12. Finally, the Joint Interim Report (2004) of the Council and the Commission on the Implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, *Education and Training 2010: the Success of the Lisbon Strategy Hinges on Urgent Reforms*, identified guidance as one of four key actions to create open, attractive and accessible learning environments in order to "... support learning at all ages and in a range of settings, empower citizens to manage their learning and work, particularly making it easier for them to access and progress through diverse learning opportunities and career pathways."

NOTE:

- That the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society creates new challenges for policy makers in the areas of human resource development and of guidance policies, systems and practices.
- That the emergence of a knowledge-based society and the need for lifelong learning requires an intensive focus on guidance policy at national, sectoral, regional and local levels. Services need to be available at times and in forms which will encourage all citizens to continue to develop their skills and competences throughout their lives, linked to changing needs in the labour market. Such services need to be viewed as an active tool, and individuals should be positively encouraged to use them.
- That increased co-operation in guidance at all levels should be pursued within a lifelong learning perspective in order to make full use of the diversity of systems currently to be found in the Member States of the European Union and to overcome fragmentation between different forms of provision.
- The relevant activities already underway in Europe, especially the work of the Lisbon Objectives follow-up groups on the development of common concepts and principles for guidance throughout life; activities supported by EU education, training and employment programmes and the European Social Fund (ESF), and the need for co-ordination and complementarity between all of these activities.
- The results of reviews of policies for guidance in European countries jointly undertaken by the European Commission (through the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF)) and the OECD, in association with the World Bank, which show that, in many countries, policies, systems and practices for guidance in Europe do not match the demands of knowledge-based economies and societies and call for a reform of policies and a rethinking of practices in this area.

- *The Framework of Actions for the Lifelong Development of Competences and Qualifications* agreed by the European social partners in the context of the European Social Dialogue underlines the necessity for employees and enterprises to have access to information, guidance and counselling services in order to pursue a strategy for developing the competences of individual workers.

STRESS:

- That, as appropriate and given local circumstances, all European citizens should have access to guidance services at all life stages, with particular attention being paid to individuals and groups at risk.
- The preventive role of guidance services in encouraging school completion and their contribution to the empowerment of individuals to manage their own learning and careers and to the re-integration of early school leavers in appropriate education and training programmes.
- The importance of guidance in promoting the social and economic integration of citizens through supporting access by all to education, training and work opportunities, enhancing completion rates at all levels of education and training, including further and higher education and adult education and training and facilitating the occupational and geographical mobility of learners and workers in Europe .
- The need for flexibility and diversity of guidance provision including the use of innovative methodologies and technologies, outreach and related services to increase access to such services, especially in respect of provision for hard-to-reach young persons and adults and to overcome economic and geographical disadvantage.
- The centrality of the beneficiaries of guidance in both the design and evaluation of guidance provision for both young people and adults.
- The involvement of all relevant actors, including the social partners, in line with national practice, in the guidance process, both in ensuring workers' access to guidance services, and in supporting education and training providers and guidance services through, e.g. providing work experience and work shadowing placements, promoting entrepreneurship and a spirit of enterprise and facilitating employees' access to guidance services.

REAFFIRM AS PRIORITIES

- Their commitment to the development of high quality guidance provision for all European citizens, accessible at all stages of their lives to enable them to manage their learning and work pathways and the transitions therein.
- The need for further co-operation in the area of guidance through actions and policies developed primarily in the context of the follow-up to the Lisbon Strategy in the field of education and training, *Education and Training 2010* and also taking into account the European Employment Strategy, the Framework Strategy and Gender Equality and European policies for Social Inclusion, Mobility, and Services of General Interest.
- The importance of refocusing guidance provision, where appropriate, in order to develop citizens' lifelong and lifewide learning and management skills as an integral part of education and training programmes.

- The development at national, regional and local levels, where appropriate, of better quality assurance mechanisms for guidance services, information and products (including on-line services), particularly from a citizen/consumer perspective.
- The need to strengthen structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels by involving the appropriate key players (such as ministries, social partners, employment services, service providers, guidance practitioners, education and training institutions, consumers, parents and youth).
- The need to follow-up guidance policy issues within the Education and Training 2010 work programme.

INVITE THE COMMISSION:

- To enhance co-operation at international level with relevant organisations, for example the OECD, ILO, UNESCO, in the development of policies and concrete actions for guidance throughout life;

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES

- To examine, where appropriate, existing national guidance provision in the education and training and the employment sectors, in the context of the findings of the Commission, OECD and World Bank reviews of policies for guidance;
- To seek to ensure effective co-operation and co-ordination between providers of guidance at national, regional and local levels in the provision of guidance services, in order to widen access and to ensure the coherence of provision, especially to groups at risk;
- To encourage schools, institutes of further and higher education, training providers to promote reflective learning techniques and autonomous learning, in order to enable young people and adults to self-manage their learning and career paths effectively;

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCIES

- To build on and adapt existing European structures and activities (networks, work groups, programmes) related to the implementation of the above priorities.
- To identify, together with all relevant actors, including the social partners, areas where co-operation and support at European level can enhance national developments in the area of guidance;
- To ensure maximum return in terms of impact on policies, systems and practices at Community and national levels from collaborative activities with the Member States in the field of guidance throughout life, funded by existing and future education and training instruments and the European Social Fund;
- To ensure the integration of a gender perspective in all policies and practice relating to guidance provision;
- To encourage and support providers of initial and continuing education of guidance practitioners to reflect current best practice across the Union in their training programmes;
- To cooperate in the improvement of the quality of information relating to international and national best practice available to policy makers;
- To include a consideration of guidance policies, as appropriate, in future reports on the follow-up of the Education and Training 2010 programme."

– ***"Europass" - Single portfolio for qualifications and competences****

The Council reached political agreement on a draft European Parliament and Council Decision on "Europass", a single portfolio of documents reflecting the qualifications and competences of citizens looking for a job or for admission to a lifelong learning scheme in Europe.

The draft Decision is aimed at establishing a single personal, coordinated portfolio, therefore improving transparency and mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications, and contributing to enhancement of mobility within the European labour market.

Europass will include a set of documents with a common brand name and a common logo, to be linked to the European CV. The Decision provides for Europass Mobility (for periods of learning other countries), Europass-Diploma supplement (for high education), Europass-Language portfolio (for language competences), and Europass-Certificate supplement (for vocational training). The portfolio may also include further documents that are consistent with its purpose. Citizens would be free to use any single document or the whole portfolio.

The new portfolio is aimed at replacing documents already existing, like the European CV⁵, the Europass Training document⁶, the Certificate Supplement and the European Language Portfolio of the Council of Europe.

The draft Decision takes into account the European Parliament first reading opinion, delivered on 21 April 2004. After finalisation in all Community languages, the text will be adopted in the form of a common position, without further discussion, at a forthcoming session of the Council and subsequently sent to the European Parliament with a view to its 2nd reading.

For further information, please consult the following documents on the Council's website: 5032/04 (Commission proposal), 8709/04 (EP amendments).

⁵ Commission Recommendation 2002/236/EC, of 11 March 2002 (OJ L 79, 22.3.2002, p. 66).

⁶ Council Decision 1999/51/EC of 21 December 1998 (OJ L 17, 22.1.1999, p. 45).

– ***Quality assurance in vocational education and training - Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

AWARE that

- it is the European Union's role to contribute to the development of quality education whilst fully respecting the competencies of the Member States as well as to work together with the Member States with the aim of building a competitive knowledge-based economy.
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) is a vital component of the strategy set at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, for becoming by 2010 the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth and greater social cohesion.
- the Communication from the Commission on 'Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality' (November 2001), and the Council (Education) resolution on lifelong learning (June 2002) stressed that quality is a principle of lifelong learning.
- the Barcelona European Council in March 2002 agreed that the concrete objectives of education and training systems should be:- quality, access and opening up to the wider world. Furthermore, Barcelona set the target of making Europe's education and training systems a world quality reference by 2010. The Barcelona conclusions also requested further European cooperation in the area of vocational training.
- the European Employment Strategy calls upon Member States to implement lifelong learning strategies, emphasising the need to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training systems, and to improve public and private investment in human resources. The objectives set in education and training policy should increasingly complement those of economic and labour policy in order to combine social cohesion and competitiveness.
- the Copenhagen Declaration, (November 2002), involving the social partners, the EEA-EFTA countries and the candidate countries, and the Council Resolution, (December 2002), on Enhanced Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training give priority to
 'Promoting cooperation in quality assurance with particular focus on exchange of models and methods, as well as common criteria and principles for quality in vocational education and training.'
- both the Copenhagen Declaration and the Council Resolution on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training identified certain concrete outputs in the fields of quality assurance, transparency and recognition, in order to improve the overall performance and attractiveness of VET and to foster mobility. The Resolution invited the Member States and the Commission to take the appropriate steps necessary to implement these priorities, building on and adapting relevant structures and instruments.

- following the Resolution and as an outcome of subsequent cooperative work between the Commission, the Member States, social partners, the EEA – EFTA and the candidate countries on the Quality Assurance priority, a Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) has been outlined. It was developed through stock taking experiences in and across Member States. Such a Framework should provide a basis and support for Member States in developing and improving their existing national or regional systems and approaches to quality assurance. It should further aim to help Member States to monitor and evaluate their own systems and practices.
- the Joint Interim Report, identifies the definition of a Common Quality Assurance Framework in the context of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration as a priority.
- such a framework would include the following integrated elements:
 - an appropriate model, to facilitate planning, evaluation and review of systems at the appropriate levels in Member States.
 - an appropriate methodology for review of systems, for example self assessment, to enable Member States at the appropriate level to be self critical and strive for continued improvements.
 - monitoring as appropriate at national or regional level, possibly combined with voluntary peer review.
 - measurement tools developed at national or regional level to facilitate Member States to monitor and evaluate their own systems.

STRESSES that

- a CQAF can contribute to increasing transparency and consistency between Member States' policy initiatives, while fully respecting their responsibility for the development of their own systems.
- the objectives set in VET policy should focus on the improvement and evaluation of the results of VET in terms of increasing employability, improving the match between demand and supply, and better access to lifelong training, in particular for vulnerable people.
- there is need for Member States to analyse the effectiveness and attractiveness of their VET systems and for them to strengthen the links between their education and training system and working life.
- a CQAF constitutes an appropriate common European framework and systematic approach to quality assurance in order to meet the above objectives and needs. It can help policy makers and practitioners to get a better insight of how the existing models work, to share best practice and to improve quality systems, on the basis of common understandings.
- the potential of the framework for policy decision-making in the field of quality assurance in VET can be particularly relevant in countries where quality systems are not explicitly developed.

INVITES

The Member States and the Commission, within their respective competencies to :

- promote a CQAF on a voluntary basis while making best use of existing and future national and Community policy instruments.
- develop, together with the relevant stakeholders, practical initiatives in order to assess its added value in improving national or regional systems.
- coordinate activities at national and regional level between the main actors responsible for VET in order to encourage coherence with the Copenhagen Declaration and the Joint Interim Report.
- promote the creation of cooperative and voluntary networks on an experimental basis. This will enable the trans-national exchanges of best practices based on the current and future generations of education and training programmes.
- explore where appropriate the use of common measurement tools, to assist Member States to monitor and evaluate their own systems."

– ***Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning - Conclusions***

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

Aware that

In the context of the principle of learning throughout life, the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning aim to make visible and to value the full range of knowledge and competences held by an individual, irrespective of where or how these have been acquired. The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning take place inside and outside formal education and training, in the workplace and in civil society.

Identification and validation are key instruments in enabling the transfer and acceptance of all learning outcomes across different settings. Identification records and makes visible the individual's learning outcomes. This does not result in a formal certificate or diploma, but it may provide the basis for such formal recognition. Validation is based on the assessment of the individual's learning outcomes and may result in a certificate or diploma⁷.

Education, training and employability were recognised by the European Lisbon Council in March 2000 as an integral part of economic and social policies needed to attain the strategic goal of Europe becoming the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010.

In follow-up to the report on the concrete future objectives of European education and training systems (March 2001), the detailed work programme adopted by the Council (14 June 2002), called for the development of ways to officially validate non-formal learning experiences.

The Commission White Paper entitled '*A new impetus for European Youth*' (21 November 2001) which set out a new framework for European co-operation on youth affairs, stressed the importance of non-formal learning and education.

The Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning (27 June 2002) invites the Member States to encourage co-operation and effective measures to validate learning outcomes.

The European social partners' '*Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications*' (14 March 2002) underlines the point that the recognition and validation of competences and qualifications is both a shared objective and a main priority for action at the European level.

The Copenhagen Declaration (30 November 2002) and the Council Resolution (19 December 2002) on the promotion of enhanced European co-operation in vocational education and training acknowledged that priority should be given to developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater comparability between approaches in different countries and at different levels.

⁷ The term validation is used in a very specific sense in the above text but is used differently in the Member States. For some, the term is broadly used to encompass the identification as well as the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The Council and Commission Joint Interim Report (26 February 2004) to the Spring European Council, '*Education and Training 2010*', states that the development of common European references and principles can usefully support national policies. Although such common principles do not create obligations for Member States, they contribute to developing mutual trust between the key players and encouraging reform. The Joint Interim Report specifically calls for the development of common European principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Recognise that

The Member States, the Commission, the EEA-EFTA and accession countries and the social partners at European level, in following-up the Copenhagen Declaration, the Council Resolution and the work programme on the Future Objectives, have made progress in developing common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning serves the needs of the individual learner. They support social integration, employability and the development and use of human resources in civic, social and economic contexts. They also meet the specific needs of those individuals who seek integration or re-integration into education and training, the labour market and society.

A diversity of approaches and practices of identification and validation exists and is emerging at European national, regional and local level.

A diversity of stakeholders is also involved. They are, amongst others, providers and competent authorities in formal education and training, social partners in the workplace and non-governmental organisations in civil society. While identification is a matter for all stakeholders, as well as for the individual, in a certain number of Member States validation is only a matter for the competent authorities in accordance with national legislation.

Stress that

Common European principles are necessary to encourage and guide the development of high-quality, trustworthy approaches and systems for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

They are necessary to ensure the comparability and wide acceptance of different approaches and systems in the Member States. They also enable the transfer and acceptance of all learning outcomes across different settings. They take particular account of the needs and entitlements of individuals.

The following common European principles, are addressed to the Member States, the Commission and stakeholders who are engaged in the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. They are, to be applied on a voluntary basis. They fully respect the rights, responsibilities and competences of the Member States and stakeholders. They inform the development of systems and approaches to identification and validation and do not prescribe any particular approach or system.

The common European principles reflect the cooperative work at European level in follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration, the Council Resolution of 19 December 2002, the work programmes on the Future Objectives and, in particular, the Joint Interim Report "*Education and Training 2010*", February 2004. The principles are set out under the following main headings:

- *Individual entitlements*

The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should, in principle, be a voluntary matter for the individual. There should be equal access and equal and fair treatment for all individuals. The privacy and rights of the individual are to be respected.

- *Obligations of stakeholders*

Stakeholders, should establish, in accordance with their rights, responsibilities and competences, systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These should include appropriate quality assurance mechanisms. Stakeholders should provide guidance, counselling and information about these systems and approaches to individuals.

- *Confidence and trust*

The processes, procedures and criteria for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms.

- *Credibility and legitimacy*

Systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should respect the legitimate interests ensure the balanced participation of the relevant stakeholders.

The process of assessment should be impartial and mechanisms should be put in place to avoid any conflict of interest. The professional competence of those who carry out assessment should also be assured.

INVITE, IN RELATION TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING, THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCIES

To disseminate and promote the use of the common European principles.

To encourage the European social partners, in the context of social dialogue, to use and adapt the common European principles for the specific needs of the workplace.

To encourage non-governmental organisations engaged in providing lifelong learning opportunities to use and adapt the common European principles as appropriate.

To support the exchange of experiences and mutual learning including the development of a European Inventory on the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

To strengthen co-operation with international organisations with a view to achieving synergies in this field.

To develop and support coherent and comparable ways of presenting the results of the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning at European level, and consider how the existing instruments in the Europass framework for transparency of qualifications and competences can contribute to this.

To consider how the common European principles could support ongoing work on credit transfer and accumulation, quality assurance and guidance and, in general, contribute to the development of a European Qualifications Framework which was called for in the Joint Interim Report of the Commission and Council, February 2004.

To support the development of quality assurance mechanisms and, in particular, to consider how to promote the professional development of those who carry out assessment, for example, through support networks aimed at developing and disseminating good practice."

– ***European Centre for the development of vocational training****

The Council reached political agreement on a draft Council Regulation aimed at rationalising the functioning and increasing the effectiveness of the EU' Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)⁸.

The draft Regulation provides, inter alia, for an adjustment in the composition of the Cedefop Board in order to take account of the accession of the EU's ten new Member States.

The European Parliament having voted in favour of the Commission proposal on 31 March 2004, the draft regulation will be adopted without further discussion at a forthcoming session of the Council, after its finalisation in all Community languages.

For further information, please consult the following documents on the Council's website: 6030/04 (Commission proposal).

⁸ Council Regulation 337/75 (OJ L 39 of 13.02.1975, p. 1) as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 1655/2003 (OJ L 245, 29.9.2003, p. 41).

– ***Education and training programmes - Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"These Conclusions are without prejudice to the position of the Council on the Commission Communication on Building our common Future: Policy challenges and Budgetary means of the Enlarged Union 2007-2013 and related legislative proposals

The Council notes the Commission's interim reports on the implementation of the existing Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Tempus programmes and welcomes its Communication of

9 March 2004 on a new generation of education and training programmes, on which it makes the following observations:

1. It endorses the adoption of an integrated approach covering education and training. It considers this approach better adapted than the current structure to the differing needs of the sectors, where appropriate, enhancing the complementarity between policies in the field of education and training and social and economic strategies, as a tool to support both social cohesion and competitiveness.
2. It underlines the importance of ensuring that the programmes better support policy developments at European level in education and training, notably in relation to the Lisbon strategy, and to the strategic objectives provided in the "Report on the concrete future objectives of education and training systems". It also affirms that the focus of the programmes should be on activities with added value in relation to priorities and aims already shared.
3. It notes the Commission's proposed quantified targets for the programmes, and notes that their final form and level will largely depend on the outcome of the negotiations on the financial perspectives for 2007-2013.
4. It strongly underlines the importance of achieving administrative and financial simplification in the new generation of programmes, and invites the Commission to propose necessary measures as part of the draft programme Decisions and as amendments to the Financial Regulation and Implementing Rules as appropriate. It welcomes the Commission's intention to delegate an increased proportion of the budget of the Integrated Programme to National Agencies.
5. It notes the proposed extension of the Tempus programme beyond higher education to the broader spectrum of lifelong learning.
6. It takes note of the timetable for adoption of the programmes by end 2005, which was confirmed for the Integrated Programme at the Brussels European Council of March 2004, and stresses the importance in consequence of receiving the Commission's legislative proposals as soon as possible."

YOUTH

– *Social integration of young people - Resolution*

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States adopted the following resolution:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

Recalling that:

1. The European Commission White Paper entitled "A new impetus for European Youth" presented on 21 November 2001 proposes a new framework for European Cooperation on Youth Affairs.
2. At the Council (Education and Youth Affairs) meeting held on 14 February 2002, the Council recognised the White Paper as the starting point for the establishment of a framework for European cooperation on youth affairs.
3. The Council (Education and Youth Affairs) and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, in their Resolution of 27 June 2002 establishing a new framework for cooperation in the youth field, recognised that in this new framework, the Commission's White Paper on Youth identified a number of horizontal issues in the context of taking greater account of youth in other policies. These areas are
 - Education, Lifelong Learning
 - Mobility
 - Employment
 - Social Integration
 - Combating racism and xenophobia
 - Autonomy
4. The Lisbon European Council of March 2000 set in place "an open method of coordination", to be used, amongst other areas, as a basis for policies for combating poverty and social exclusion with the aim of making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010.
5. The report of the Employment Task Force⁹, chaired by Mr. Wim Kok, in setting out the basic challenges in attaining the Lisbon objectives, stresses the importance of more and better investments in human resources, in particular reducing the rate of early school leaving and promoting the access of young people to university studies.

⁹ "Employment in Europe". Report of the employment Task force, Wim Kok, November 2003.

6. The Council Conclusions of 25 November 2003 on the development of human capital for social cohesion and competitiveness in the knowledge society also stressed the importance of investments in human capital, and recalled the need to combine social cohesion and competitiveness.
7. The Council Resolution of 25 November 2003 on making school an open learning environment to prevent and combat early school leaving and disaffection among young people and to encourage their social inclusion recognised that it is advisable to strengthen cooperation and increase complementarity between the various Community instruments including the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth Programmes, the European Social Fund and the guidelines on social inclusion, in order to render more efficient the integration of measures.
8. The Nice European Council of December 2000 adopted a European strategy against social exclusion and all forms of discrimination. This strategy had four (4) objectives to combat poverty and social exclusion ie: to facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services, to prevent the risk of exclusion, to help the most vulnerable and to mobilise all relevant interests.
9. Following on this, a Resolution on the social inclusion of young people was adopted by the Education and Youth Council on 14 December 2000.
10. Furthermore, a resolution on promoting young people's initiative, enterprise and creativity: from exclusion to empowerment, was adopted by the Education and Youth Council on 28 May 2001.
11. The Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning took into consideration the youth dimension and referred specifically to the horizontal issues contained in the EU Commission White Paper on Youth.
12. The Youth Community action programme established by the decision of 13 April 2000, has as one of its objectives, the purpose of encouraging young people to take an active role in society.
13. The European Council of 25 and 26 March 2004 insisted on the need for increased investment in human capital with a view to growth and productivity as well as to develop integration and social inclusion.

INVITE the Member States, in pursuance of the social integration horizontal issues contained in the White Paper on Youth to develop strategies and proposals to ensure that meaningful social inclusion measures are developed in the context of policies related to youth, bearing in mind the following issues: -

- (i) The social condition of young people relates directly to the success or otherwise of social inclusion policies or measures. Public policy should, therefore, seek to support opportunities and possibilities and take steps to minimise risk to and vulnerability of young people.

- (ii) Poverty and social exclusion take complex and multi-dimensional forms which require the mobilisation of a wide range of competent policies and actors.
- (iii) In 2001, 19% of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 were classified as being at risk of poverty. This is 4% higher than the average for all age groups and the same as that for 0-15 year olds and those over 65¹⁰.
- (iv) Where young people experience social exclusion, the possibility for securing commitment to constructive participation in civil society by these young people is weakened or significantly diminished.
- (v) The reasoning behind plans and decisions must be based on a gender perspective. In other words, it must be centred on the differences between the needs of girls and boys, young women and young men.

CALL FOR THE MEMBER STATES TO:

Take particular account of the measures appropriate in a social integration context to young people. In this regard it is desirable that there be more coherence, coordination and cooperation in the formulation of policies of a social nature, with particular regard to the youth sector.

These measures may be adopted at any appropriate level (national, regional or local) in order to ensure activity is closely linked to young people.

Consider the following non exhaustive list of measures in the development of their Social Integration policies: -

- (i) Take into account the specific needs of the young people in the implementation of objectives concerning the fight against poverty and social exclusion.
- (ii) Take further steps to increase the participation rate of young people especially from disadvantaged and marginalised communities in the formal school system.
- (iii) Enhance support for young people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, in making the transition from school to work.
- (iv) Support programmes and activities that facilitate access to employment and the improvement of employability of young people, especially through counselling and professional training actions that include the development of social skills and personalised guidance.
- (v) Provide opportunities whereby young people can re-enter education or training appropriate to their needs, aspirations and abilities, taking into consideration the needs of the labour market, and help young people to participate in activities that lead to their personal and social development.

¹⁰ Commission staff working paper: Draft Joint Inclusion Report - Statistical Annex. SEC(2003) 1425 (doc. 16241/03 ADD 1).

- (vi) Acknowledge the important role played by non-formal and informal education/learning as a complement to formal education in combating social exclusion in relation to young people and that this should be appropriately recognised, particularly by validating knowledge and competencies acquired by young people in this context.
- (vii) Encourage youth work programmes and services to inform young people about "the democratic process", the need and desirability for young people to engage in civil society and voluntary work activities.
- (viii) Provide access for all young people to relevant information regarding areas of concern to them such as education, health, employment opportunities, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and encourage young people to use these facilities.
- (ix) Pursue efforts to combat discrimination against young people on the grounds of socio-economic status or based on sex, social or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.
- (x) Take steps for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to be properly taken into account in the area of housing policy where appropriate.
- (xi) Develop and support health educational activities, both in formal and non-formal education.
- (xii) Take account of the value of crime and violence prevention measures and crime rehabilitation programmes in a social inclusion context; these could be part of youth work programmes and services as appropriate.

CALL FOR THE MEMBERS STATES AND THE COMMISSION WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCIES TO:

- (i) Ensure that Youth work programmes and services should be flexible to take account of any special needs of young people from disadvantaged areas.
- (ii) Seek to extend and promote for young people more active learning, which is better focused on the needs of the civil society in facilitating their engagement in voluntary activity and their involvement in cultural, sporting and recreational activities and validate their work., while taking into account the needs of the labour market.
- (iii) Give a high priority to young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the further implementation of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on poverty and social exclusion, and in the development of initiatives under the Community action programme on social exclusion, and ensure that key youth actors including young people and their youth organisations are actively involved in consultations regarding the development of the OMC and in the development, implementation and monitoring of National Action Plans on social inclusion.
- (iv) Strengthen the links between young people and their families, schools, youth organisations and local communities with special regard to the particular capabilities and requirements of young people.

- (v) Recognise the important role to be played by youth organisations, professional, volunteer and other adults in assisting young people to expand their knowledge, ambitions and horizons of the world at large.
- (vi) Ensure a greater synergy and connection among different Community instruments for young people, such as Socrates, Leonardo, Youth programmes and, where appropriate, the European Union Structural Funds.

Finally, there should be better coordination between youth policy and other important sectors such as education, social affairs, employment, etc."

– ***Racism and Intolerance in relation to Young People - Declaration***

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States made the following declaration:

"The European Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and on the rule of law, principles, which are common to the Member States."¹¹

Young People "believe that a great deal more must be done to guarantee the fundamental rights of each individual and, even more importantly, to guarantee the rights of minorities and tackle all forms of discrimination and racism by all available means."¹²

Therefore:

The Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council:

Recalling that:

1. The European Commission White Paper entitled "A new impetus for European Youth" presented on 21 November 2001 proposes a new framework for European Cooperation on Youth Affairs, which the Council (Education and Youth Affairs) of 14 February 2002 recognised as the starting point for the establishment of a framework for European cooperation on youth affairs.
2. The Council (Education and Youth Affairs) and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, in their Resolution of 27 June 2002 establishing a new framework for cooperation in the youth field, recognised that in this new framework, the Commission's White Paper on Youth identified among the horizontal issues in the context of taking greater account of youth in other policies that of combating racism and xenophobia.
3. The Council at its meeting of 28 June 2001 adopted a 'Declaration by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, Meeting within the Council, on Combating Racism and Xenophobia on the Internet by Intensifying Work with Young People'¹³.
4. The Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

¹¹ Treaty on EU, Preamble.

¹² EU Commission White Paper 'A new impetus for European youth', 2001, p.19.

¹³ OJ C 196, 12/07/2001, p.1.

5. The Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.
6. The Council Decision of 27 November 2000, establishing a community action programme to combat discrimination (2001 to 2006).
7. The Council Regulation (EC) no. 1035/97 of 2 June 1997 established the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.
8. The Council at its meeting of 24 November 1997 adopted a declaration on ‘The Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism in the youth field’¹⁴.
9. The Youth Programme includes, as one of its objectives:
‘...to develop understanding of the cultural diversity of Europe and its fundamental common values, thus helping to promote respect for human rights and to combat racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia...’¹⁵.

Recognising that:

1. The Governments of the Member States of the Council of Europe adopted a Political Declaration on Friday 13 October 2000 at the concluding session of the European Conference against Racism “ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL: FROM PRINCIPLE TO PRACTICE”, (The European contribution to the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance) held in Strasbourg, from 11-13 October, 2000.
2. The United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, South Africa, August – September 2001, adopted a Declaration and Programme of Action containing measures to combat racism and racial discrimination at international, regional and national levels.
3. The 6th Conference of the Ministers responsible for Youth of the Council of Europe entitled “Youth constructing Europe”, Thessaloniki, Greece, November 2002, concluded by deciding to give priority, among Council of Europe youth activities, to intercultural dialogue, democratic participation and citizenship and to prevention of violence.

Emphasise that:

1. Article 13 of the Treaty provides for “appropriate action to combat discrimination, based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation”. Racism, discrimination and inequality affect young people in a particular way and young people may be both victims and perpetrators of racism and violent acts and, consequently, have a central role to play in effecting positive change in this area.

¹⁴ OJ C 1, 03/01/1998, p.1.

¹⁵ “Article 2 (1) a) of Decision 1031/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 April 2000 establishing the “Youth” Community Action Programme; Article 2 “Objectives of the programme”, paragraph 1 (a)”.

2. Racism is both overt and covert, subtle and blunt; yet, in all its forms, it is a pernicious phenomenon and is an infringement of fundamental human rights. Its manifestations may take the form of racism at different levels of society, which may often be unintentional and caused by ignorance or lack of thought; racism may take the form of, for example
 - Assaults, abuse and harassment
 - Misinformation and circulation of offensive materialor of discrimination in relation to, for example
 - Job opportunities
 - Housing
 - Health
 - Education System
 - Access to goods and services

In relation to racism there is a growing concern at the apparently increasing number of assaults involving violence.

Declare as follows:

1. Confirm the importance of the role of young people in combating racism, xenophobia and antisemitism as well as related intolerance and all forms of discrimination, and in promoting cultural diversity, mutual respect, tolerance and solidarity.
2. Young people should be supported at local, regional, national, in recognising the dangers of racism and intolerance.
3. Call for concrete measures by the European Commission and the Member States for providing young people with opportunities of playing an effective role in combating racism, xenophobia and antisemitism as well as related intolerance and all forms of discrimination, and in particular:
 - To reinforce cooperation at all levels and between all actors engaged in this combat and make it one of the priorities of the YOUTH Programme in 2005.
 - To highlight youth issues in the context of the EU-wide awareness-raising campaign on diversity and anti-discrimination entitled “For Diversity – Against Discrimination” on youth in 2005.
 - To take concrete actions on youth in programmes and activities related to these questions.
 - To develop, where appropriate, Internet platforms of and for young people based on existing examples and experience in this field.
 - Organise in 2005 a follow-up conference to the conference “Youth for Tolerance and Democracy – European perspective” in 2001 in Berlin.

- To aim at gaining a greater appreciation and knowledge of the reasons that lead to these phenomena among youth and on successful strategies to combat them.

Whenever possible, young people should take part in the definition and implementation of these measures.

4. Call for concrete measures by Member States for the same purpose in their programmes on activities for young people, at national, regional and local levels.
5. Call for cooperation with relevant European and international institutions to reinforce measures in this field.
6. The actions and measures referred to in paragraph 3 above and the progress made should be reviewed in an appropriate manner by the end of 2005."

– ***Youth programme***

The Commission presented its communication entitled “Making citizenship Work: fostering European culture and diversity through programmes for Youth, Culture, Audiovisual and Civic Participation”, which outlines its intentions for a new generation programme for the 2007-2013 period.

The Council held an exchange of views on the design and content of the new youth programme, on the basis of the following questions suggested by the Presidency:

- Is there a need to maintain and develop the existing Community instruments specially addressed to young people and is the outline of the new programme as contained in the Commission’s communication broadly in line with the opinions expressed by Ministers in the Council Conclusions of 6th May 2003?
- Do the proposed common objectives on ‘voluntary activities’ meet the challenges related to this issue, with specific reference to your country?
- Do the proposed common objectives on ‘greater understanding and knowledge of youth’ meet the challenges related to this issue, with specific reference to your country?

The debate was intended to help the Commission on its further reflections. In fact, as the current youth programme will come to an end on 2006, the Commission intends to submit, later this year, a legislative proposal for a new programme for the 2007-2013 period, focusing in “Youth for Europe”, “European voluntary service”, “Youth of the world”, “Social-educational instructors and support systems”, “Support for political cooperation” actions.

For further information, please consult the following documents on the Council’s website: 7352/04 (Commission Communication), 9636/04 and 9637/04 (Commission working papers), 9290/04 (Presidency’s questions).

OTHER BUSINESS

Under this item, the Council was briefed

- by the French delegation, on European cultural cooperation;
- by the French and German delegations, on the outcome of a European youth conference on the voluntary effort in an enlarged Europe;
- by the Swedish delegation, on a conference held in Göteborg on education for sustainable development “Learning to change our world”.
- by the Hellenic delegation on preparation for the Olympic Games and use of the Olympic facilities after the Games.

For further information, please consult the following documents on the Council’s website: 9340/04 and 9657/04, 9341/04, 9446/04.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

EC-fYROM Stabilisation and Association Council

The Council adopted a Decision on a Community Position concerning a Decision of the EC and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Stabilisation and Association Council adopting its Rules of Procedure including the Rules of Procedure of the Stabilisation and Association Committee (9639/04)
